

STATEMENT OF BIOSCIENCE DIVISION LEADER JILL TREWHELLA REGARDING DOE ANNOUNCEMENT ON BSL-3

The Department of Energy's announcement today of the Environmental Assessment "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) regarding Los Alamos' proposed Biosafety Level-3 facility is an important step forward. The BSL-3 facility will enable the Laboratory to make even greater contributions to protecting the people of the United States from possible bioterrorist attacks as well as natural disease outbreaks.

The BSL-3 facility will allow Los Alamos researchers to handle, with appropriate safety procedures, organisms that are potential threat agents. The facility will enhance our ability to develop advanced detection and analytical capabilities, as well as support creation of better protective strategies by enabling research on how these organisms cause disease. This work is central to the National Nuclear Security Administration's Chemical and Biological National Security Program (CBNP) that focuses on domestic preparedness against chemical or biological terrorist attacks. CBNP is the major sponsor for the BSL-3.

Laboratory Director John Browne has expressed to me that he is satisfied with the environmental review, convinced of the importance of this area of research for the Laboratory and our ability to conduct research in this facility safely, and thus gives his approval to the project. As we move forward with design, construction and ultimately research in the new facility, the safety of our employees and of the public will continue to be our foremost priority.

Speaking on behalf of the Laboratory, I reaffirm our commitment to continue to engage with local communities as this project advances. I have personally enjoyed the opportunity to meet with members of the public to understand better their concerns and to provide information about the BSL-3 and the contributions Los Alamos has to offer the country in the area of bioscience.

With the completion of DOE's Environmental Assessment process through the issuance of the FONSI, Los Alamos will now initiate a detailed design of the facility, including all of its safety and security features. The facility will be built according to biosafety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health. The Laboratory will ask the CDC to review the plans for the facility and will incorporate the CDC comments and suggestions into the ultimate design. Additionally, Los Alamos will go through the formal process required to update the Laboratory's CDC registration to receive and work with select agents at a BSL-3 level. Once the registration is complete, the new facility will be subject to CDC inspection. Los Alamos' Institutional Biosafety Committee, which includes

members from the public, will review and approve protocols for all work to be done with biological hazards in the new facility. Construction of the facility could begin as early as this summer.